

MR. WILKES'S SPEECH

ON THE

IMPEACHMENT

OF

WARREN HASTINGS Esq.

[Price One Shilling.]

MR. W. L. G. STUBBS

OF THE

BRITISH MUSEUM

AND THE



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THE  
S P E E C H  
OF  
MR. W I L K E S  
IN THE  
HOUSE OF COMMONS,  
On the NINTH of MAY 1787,  
RESPECTING THE  
IMPEACHMENT  
OF  
WARREN HASTINGS Esq.

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L O N D O N:  
PRINTED FOR G. G. J. AND J. ROBINSON,  
PATER-NOSTER ROW.

THE  
S. P. E. C. H.

MR. W. L. H. S.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OF GREAT BRITAIN

IN PARLIAMENT



W. A. R. E. S.

L O N D O N.

Printed by G. J. and J. ROBINSON,

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VOTES of the House of Commons. Page 615.

*Mercurii, 9<sup>o</sup> die Maii, 1787.*

The order of the day being read for taking into further consideration the [*first*] *Report* which was made from the Committee, to whom it was referred, to prepare Articles of Impeachment against *Warren Hastings* Esquire, late Governor General of Bengal,

*Resolved,*

That the said Articles of Impeachment be *now* read a second time, article by article.

Lord *Hood* opposed the second reading of the *Report*.  
After which,

Mr. *Wilkes* said,

Mr. Speaker,

I Am very happy to hear the firm negative of the noble Lord to the *second* reading of what is called the *first Report* of the Committee. I rise to give every support in my power to his Lordship's proposition, for upon

the most careful investigation of this *Report*, I do not hesitate to assert that it is built on a false and rotten foundation. The *Articles* stated in the *Report* are in manifest and direct contradiction to the documents, and all the evidence, on the table of the House. Mr. Hastings is charged by the *Report* in express terms, *with not regarding the sacred obligation of his oath, nor the important duties of the high offices to which he was appointed, but entertaining base and corrupt views of procuring for himself and his dependants exorbitant wealth, &c. by many unjustifiable acts by him done and committed, whilst he was President and Governor General of Bengal, by various unwarrantable and criminal practices, faithlessly, illegally, and tyrannically violate the duties of his station, by each and all of which practices the welfare of the East India Company has materially suffered, the happiness of the native inhabitants of India been deeply affected, their confidence in English faith and lenity shaken and impaired, and the honour of the crown, and character of this nation, as far as in him lay, wantonly and wickedly degraded.*

These are indeed, Sir, heavy and atrocious charges, and therefore ought not to have been brought forward without the fullest, and most incontrovertible evidence. I shall proceed to prove, that the whole is unfounded, mere rant and declamation, of which the papers, which have been read by the clerk, give a clear and irrefragable proof. I will not fatigue the House with voluminous extracts from the many folio volumes now on our table, but content myself with the unexceptionable evidence of the late Governor General of Bengal, Sir John Macpherson, so late as the 10th of August 1786, and the records of the East India Company.

Sir

Sir John Macpherfon in a letter to the Court of Directors, dated from Calcutta the 10th of August 1786, says, *The condition in which Earl Cornwallis will receive the government of India, is creditable to the Company, and cannot but be satisfactory to the Nation. The native inhabitants of this kingdom are, I believe, the happiest and best protected subjects in India; our native Allies and Tributaries are satisfied, and confide in our protection; the Country Powers are emulously aspiring to the friendship of the English; and from the King of Tidore, towards New Guinea, to Timur Shaw, on the banks of the Indus, there is not a State that has not LATELY given us proofs of confidence and respect.* With what pride and exultation will an Englishman contemplate, and dwell upon, this pleasing picture of the happiness of the inhabitants of India, a picture drawn on the spot the last autumn? With what a mixture of horror and indignation will he turn away from a false, coarse, and wretched daubing made at home by a Westminster Committee, and heightened with all the gloomy and frightful colours of misery and despair, instead of the scenes of cheerfulness, which nature in reality presents?

Two or three more quotations of no considerable length I beg leave to submit to the House. The Report states, *That the welfare of the East India Company has materially suffered by the various unwarrantable and criminal practices of Mr. Hastings.* Now, Sir, the most natural judge to decide this question must be the *East India Company*. Let us examine *their* sentiments, whether *they* think that *they* have *materially suffered*, or been *highly benefited* under the government of

Mr. Hastings. I desire, Sir, to read the *unanimous Resolution* of the 28th of June 1785.

*Resolved unanimously,*

*That the Chairman be directed in the name of the Court to congratulate Governor Hastings on his safe arrival, and to return him the thanks of this Court for the long, faithful, and able services he has rendered to the Company.* There was but one opinion at that time among his constituents of the merits of the late Governor General; and the above honourable testimony was given to Mr. Hastings after he had closed the long glories of his government, for he sailed from Bengal in the Barrington on the 7th of February 1785.

The two preceding years had borne the like grateful evidence to the services of Mr. Hastings.

The General Court of Proprietors on the 7th of November 1783, came to the following Resolution.

*Resolved,*

*That it is the opinion of this Court, that Warren Hastings Esquire, Governor General of Bengal, and the other Members of the Supreme Council, have displayed uncommon zeal, ability, and exertion in the management of the affairs of the East India Company, during the late hostilities in India, particularly in finding resources for supporting the war in the Carnatic under so many pressing difficulties, when that country was in danger of being lost, through the successful irruption of Hyder Ally Cawn, AIDED BY THE POWERFUL ASSISTANCE OF THE FRENCH; and also in concluding the late Treaty of Peace with the Marattas at a*  
*period*



*period so critical, and on terms so honourable and advantageous to the permanent interests of the Company.*

*Resolved,*

*Therefore that the thanks of this Court be given to Warren Hastings, Governor General, and the other Members of the Supreme Council, for the above specified great and distinguished services, and further, that this Court doth request the said Warren Hastings Esq; Governor General not to resign the station he now holds until the tranquillity of our possessions in India shall be restored, and the arrangements necessary upon the re-establishment of Peace shall have taken place.*

The last quotation I beg the House to indulge me with reading, is that of the 28th of October, 1784.

*Resolved unanimously,*

*That as peace and tranquillity are now perfectly established throughout India, and this court being sensible that this happy event has been principally owing to the very able and spirited exertions of our Governor General and of our Supreme Council, that the thanks of this Court be conveyed to Warren Hastings Esquire, for his firm, unwearied, and successful endeavours in procuring the late Peace with the several powers in India.*

I now, Sir, leave the Committee to the management of this new *Indian* war, which they have declared against a powerful confederacy, in perfect harmony and unanimity among themselves. The manifesto of our Committee states, that *the welfare of the East India Company*  
has



*has materially suffered by the practices of Mr. Hastings.* The East India Company publish to the world, and consign it on their records to posterity, that Mr. Hastings has rendered them *long, able, great, distinguished, and faithful services*, and concluded a Treaty of Peace on *terms honourable and advantageous to their permanent interests*. Mankind in general, Sir, I believe, will have little difficulty in determining that a great body of merchants must understand, and consult, their own *permanent interests*, rather better than any Committee of this House not quite so deeply interested in the event.

From the papers which I have taken the liberty of reading to the House, I now claim the right of asserting, that the charges against Mr. Hastings in this *first Report*, have received a satisfactory and compleat answer. Instead therefore of their obtaining the sanction of our approbation, truth and justice call upon us to reject them as cruel calumnies against a gentleman, who has deserved highly of his country, as a rude and base attempt to tear the well-earned laurels from his brow. Sir Eyre Coote and Sir Edward Hughes were honoured with the thanks of this House for particular services in the East during the late war. They both attributed their success in a great measure to the wisdom and vigour of the councils of the Governor General of Bengal. It is, Sir, a reproach to this House, that for those, and many other greater services, Mr. Hastings still remains *unthanked* here, although the applause of his constituents, and the people at large, have in a liberal manner given that fame which a faction among us deny.

Sir, as an Englishman, I avow my gratitude to Mr. Hastings, for I think him a distinguished benefactor of  
this

this nation. During the late inglorious war, we fully triumphed no where but in the East, under his happy auspices. *There* the perfidy of the French, and the treachery of the Dutch, were most exemplarily chastised. He preserved entire all our Asiatic provinces, and left unimpaired the extensive empire, which he governed. His conquests over our enemies comprehended every French and Dutch settlement, except *Cuddalore*, which was saved only by the Peace. It is without a precedent that so important conquests were made at no expence to the mother Country. Lord Clive had frequent and large remittances from England, to the amount of some hundred thousand pounds. Without these he could not have carried on the wars, in which he was engaged. No complaint has been made of the danger of our being impoverished, or exhausted, by Mr. Hastings's Indian wars. The wonderful resources of his mind made the war support itself. The expences of it were borne by our enemies, by the traitors and rebels in our own provinces, or by ambitious neighbours, who had leagued together for our destruction, I might say *extirpation*.

Sir, the various overt acts of sedition and rebellion in *Chey Sing*, and the *Begums*, are recorded at large in the volumes on our table. Their rooted hatred to the English is fully established. I believe that I shall not be contradicted, when I maintain that all property of every kind, *jaghires*, grants, revenues, and life itself, are forfeited to the state by delinquencies of this atrocious nature. The largeness therefore, or smallness, of a fine in such a case must be out of the question, nor can there be any pretence to complain of grievous penalties,

penalties, or exorbitant exactions, when the whole is confiscated. Whatever is left to the culpable party must proceed from mercy and compassion, all possessions and treasures of every sort being forfeited. Every wise government, with equal policy and justice, will apply to the preservation of the state what was destined for its ruin and annihilation. On these great principles of sound legislation Mr. Hastings appears to have acted. He well knew the treachery and deep dissimulation of the *Begums*. I have heard indeed, Sir, of one British Officer's life being saved by them, a captain Gordon. No mention is made of the many officers and soldiers sacrificed in the tumults and rebellion, which they excited. I do not exactly know on what account the captain was spared. Much stress is laid on the circumstance, but the instance only proves that the *Begums* had usurped the government of a country, in which they were only subjects. A solitary act of mercy is pleaded with an ill grace, and deserves little weight, against very many instances of cruelty. The rebels it is plain paid obedience to the *Begums*, whose usurped power at that time was supreme.

Much ridicule has been thrown on the number of *affidavits* taken in India on occasion of the late insurrections, revolts, and rebellions. The case is not clearly understood, nor the intention explained. The critical and dangerous situation of our government called for immediate and vigorous exertions. Our provinces and dominions were secured by instant spirit and courage, without which all had been lost. Every person on the spot was convinced of the rebellious practices of many natives of high rank and power, and of the urgency of our situation. Prudence afterwards dictated the

the measure of giving all the minutiae of legal proof to those concerned in the affairs of the East Company at home, at the distance of 4000 leagues from the scene of action, to whom many particulars of moment and magnitude were unknown. It became almost necessary for the satisfaction of some men of strict form, and minute detail, who canvass enlarged plans of government, and the comprehensive system of empires, in the rigid mode they do causes of petty larceny. They arraign the Saviour of an empire on the narrow principles and with the little chicanery of the Old Bailey. Happily for this country, the decisive moment of action was not lost by an idle attention to trifling forms. Sir, when the English under our immortal Henry V. landed in France, the year of the battle of *Agincourt*, there was a President of the Parliament of Paris, who has been consigned to eternal ridicule, a Monsieur *Louvet*, *grand personnage, au maintien grave, et qu'on eût pris pour sage*. He remonstrated in all the forms against the French troops marching, till there was an *Arrêt de Parlement* against the English Monarch and his army, signed by the *Greffier en chef* in the name of all the *Chambres*. Mr. *Hastings* appears to understand business rather better than Monsieur *Louvet*, and to have despised mere forms and cold caution, when the moment of important action arrived, which he carefully watched. The success, which followed, was adequate to the wisdom and courage of all the measures of a great statesman. The family of Monsieur *Louvet* I suspect emigrated to England, and made a cross breed with those, who, strictly observing all forms of *Votes*, *Resolutions*, and *Acts of Parliament*, lost thirteen provinces in America, with Minorca, yet dare to persecute the Saviour of India,



Sir, I am likewise ready to admit, that Mr. Hastings has sometimes gone beyond the strict letter of the powers, with which he was intrusted ; but I add a proviso, that he has always been warranted by the emergency of the occasion, and the general instructions under which he acted, and that in no instance has he been actuated by corrupt or selfish motives. He never lost sight of the *General Instructions* from his constituents of the 29th of March, 1774, *that in all your deliberations and resolutions you make the safety and prosperity of Bengal your principal object—and fix your attention on the security of the possessions and revenues of the Company.* To these important objects his strong and manly genius has sometimes sacrificed the dead letter, with all the tedious and embarrassing forms of the lower courts of law, perhaps even exceeded the usual powers of a Governor General.

Let us advert, Sir, to what passed in our own country in 1766. The capital was threatened with famine, for the stock of *corn* in hand was inconsiderable, and the harvest had failed with us, as well as in most parts of Europe. The exportation began to increase beyond the example of all former years, and commissions for the purchase of *wheat* from abroad had been received to an unusual amount. The necessities of the poor were become urgent and alarming. In this emergency Government acted wisely, and according to the spirit of the constitution, although directly against law. An *embargo* was laid on all ships in the ports of Great Britain laden with *wheat* or *wheat flower*. The people were fed, and the country rescued from the dreadful calamity of famine, which in many parts had been severely experienced. The ministers stood forth in a  
manly



manly way at their own risk, and trusted to their country for indemnity. They obtained it to the fullest extent from a grateful senate, as soon as Parliament met. The law was plain and positive, but the breach of it became meritorious from the necessity of the case, for the salvation of the state. In such arduous circumstances has the late Governor General been, and to similar exertions do we owe the preservation of our Indian empire.

This House, Sir, have made a compleat apology for Mr. Hastings's having in time of war and rebellion gone perhaps beyond the letter of his powers and instructions. In this very Session, although in a piping time of peace, we have wisely armed Lord Cornwallis, the new Governor, with more enlarged powers, better calculated for all emergencies of moment, and for so extensive, so distant an empire. I do not hold, Sir, *silent leges inter arma*; but extraordinary powers may be necessary for the safety of an endangered and convulsed state, like extraordinary remedies in dangerous and desperate diseases. A man, who could hesitate about any act necessary for the safety of his country, would be unworthy of a high trust. An empire might be lost by his incapacity and poltroonery. *Salus populi suprema lex* ought to be the first maxim of every statesman. Many cases of difficulty cannot be foreseen. In the field were numerous hosts of enemies. In the councils at home Mr. Hastings was harrassed by interested rivals, of great art, subtlety, and chicane, although of a trifling, narrow, mean, and flimsy genius. It was his fate to have his wisest and most generous plans of prosperity for a great empire thwarted by paltry, puny politicians. The single question is, and that truly momentous, was not the evident tendency of all the actions of the late Governor General, the security,

curity, the honour, the glory of the British Indian empire? We may cavil here, and struggle hard against truth, but our neighbours have long ago decided in favour of Mr. Hastings, in a manner becoming intelligent, just, and generous enemies \*.

Sir,

\* It may be amusing to observe in what manner the heroes of this scene, *Mr. Hastings, Mr. Burke, Mr. Fox, and Mr. Francis*, pass in review before our polite neighbours on the other side the channel. The following extracts are from the *Mercur de France*.

5 Fevrier, 1785.

Courage personnel, élévation d'ame, fermeté, dextérité, génie, discernement solide, esprit de détail joint à celui des grandes combinaisons politiques; toutes les qualités dispersées dans vingt Administrateurs différens, se réunissent pour former la capacité particulière et le talent de *M. Hastings*.

11 Mars, 1786.

Les apostrophes de *M. Burke* contre un homme, sans lequel il ne resteroit probablement pas un pouce de terre à l'Angleterre dans l'Indostan.

Mai 27, 1786.

*M. Burke*, semblable à l'Hydre de Lerne, reproduit sans cesse de nouvelles charges contre *M. Hastings*, en sorte qu'il est difficile de savoir quand il s'arrêtera. Pour suivre donc ce cours de ses lamentations Indiennes, il a mis en scène dans la séance des Communes, le 5 de ce mois, le Chef actuel des Rohillas, qui cette fois-ci n'est ni *trahi*, ni *exposé en vente*, ni *egorgé*, mais seulement *molesté*, par *M. Hastings*. Cet illustre Accusé n'a eu que vingt quatre heures pour répondre à cette nouvelle diatribe juridique, et il l'a fait en remettant à la Chambre une Copie de sa défense que la fatigue du travail de la nuit ne lui permit pas de lire. Nous n'avons pas cru devoir traiter sérieusement cette chaîne de persécutions, commencées par la haine du parti, poursuivies par l'amour propre, et par la vanité de bel esprit. Il seroit même à souhaiter que les Feuilles publiques ne se bornassent pas à transcrire les invectives de l'opposition, à citer des accusations comme des délits avérés, et des faits inventés ou défigurés comme l'histoire réelle de ce qui s'est passé dans l'Inde, sous le ministère de *M. Hastings*.

July 1, 1786.

*M. Burke* ayant laissé à *M. Fox* le soin d'introduire et d'établir la motion, ce dernier Membre le fit, selon sa coutume, avec beaucoup d'éloquence et d'animosité, beaucoup d'exagérations et d'argumens plausibles.

24 Fevrier, 1787.

Quoiqu'il en soit, ce n'est pas un événement ordinaire, que celui d'un pareil procès fait contre le seul Anglois, qui, dans la dernière guerre, ait sauvé les possessions commises à ses soins, et attaquées de toutes parts. Une dette accrue de 100 millions sterling n'avoit conservé à l'Angleterre, ni l'Amerique, ni quelqu'

unes

Sir, on every great question of history, policy, or legislation, we are doomed to hear comparisons drawn from the republicks of Greece and Italy, and applied to the English monarchy. The late *Governor General of Bengal* has been frequently, by a right honourable gentleman, compared to the *Roman Prætor of Sicily, Verres*. The fairness of the comparison has not, I believe, been so much thought of, as an indirect and sly compliment to the original accuser among us. He imagined that an association of ideas would naturally lead the mind to the Prince of Roman Orators, to *Cicero*, our prototype, the accuser of *Verres*. I do not quite

unes de ses Isles, ni le Sénégal, ni Minorque. Dans l'Inde, elle avoit à combattre les François, les Hollandois, les Marattes, *Hyder-Aly*, et d'autres; et la récompense de celui dont le zèle, l'activité et le courage rendirent inutile cette combinaison de dangers, est un *impeachment*.

24 Mars, 1787,

Il s'agissoit de déterminer si M. Hastings avoit eutort ou raison de laisser opprimer le Nabab de Farruckabad par le Nabab d'Oude, et de tirer de celui-ci 100,000 liv. sterling, pour cet acte d'indulgence. Le cas fut rapporté, expliqué, grossi, atténué, commenté d'une manière absolument contradictoire; et il est aisé de comprendre [qu'un événement dont les motifs et le caractère seroient à peine saisissables sur les lieux par d'excellens observateurs, doit devenir pour le moins très obscur lorsqu'il s'agit de juger sur les bords de la Tamise ce qui s'est passé à Farruckabad.

21 April, 1787.

Ces formules constituent ce que l'on appelle un *Comité secret*, (à Committee of Secrecy.) Celui ci est composé de vingt Membres, tous de l'opposition. M. M. Pitt, Dundas, Grenville, ont refusé d'y prendre place. On délibéra sur la convenance d'y admettre *M. Francis*, ennemi personnel et furieux de *M. Hastings*; et sa nomination fut confirmée à la pluralité de quelques voix.

5 Mai, 1787.

Le 18 April, M. Francis produisit une nouvelle charge contre M. Hastings, relative à l'usurpation de zéminderats dans le Bengal. La moitié du discours de l'orateur roula sur ses affaires personnelles et sur l'histoire de ses inimitiés avec M. Hastings. Il apprit à la Chambre que, lorsque lui, M. Francis, avoit été envoyé comme Membre du Conseil à Calcutta, il avoit la plus haute estime pour l'Accusé; mais que cet Accusé ayant différé d'opinion avec lui, il s'ensuivoit l'impossibilité qu'il ne fut pas un déprédateur, un brouillon, un scélérat, puisque lui étoit un parfait hon-

quite comprehend the justness of the comparison. In the *impeachment* of *Verres*, every city, town, and village of *Sicily*, except *Syracuse* and *Messana*, as well as numerous public bodies, concurred. The *impeachment* of the late Governor General of Bengal has been announced to the public above four years. Where, Sir, are the Petitions to this House against him from a single town, or village, or the most inconsiderable body of men, or even an individual in all Asia? If *he has been loaded for years with the execrations of the natives*, as was asserted in the spirit of rancour, not of truth, why has not a single person, in the space of more than two years and a quarter, since the total extinction of his power, complained to this House? With what pomp, with what an air of insolent triumph would such Petitions have been offered to you, Sir? What tedious, elaborate comments should we have suffered on every word in them? You would have been left almost to a *solo* in that chair. If *Mr. Hastings be the most notorious delinquent India ever saw*, how has it happened that no one suffering inhabitant

nête homme. Il ajouta qu'en effet il s'étoit battu en duel avec l'homme qu'il poursuivoit ; mais qu'on étoit le meilleur ami de celui avec qui l'on se battoit lorsque le combat n'avoit pour objet ni une maîtresse, ni une rivalité décidée ; que par conséquent, puisque la seule guerre des Marattes avoit armé son bras contre M. Hastings, un si noble sujet de querelle étouffoit toute idée de ressentiment, postérieur à l'instant où elle avoit été vidée ; qu' enfin, ayant été blessé et rendue à la vie par son antagoniste, il n'avoit pas cru pouvoir mieux lui témoigner sa reconnaissance, et, sur-tout, le feu de son patriotisme, qu'en le harcelant d'altercations, d'accusations, de libelles, et d'intrigues pendant six ans. Toute extraordinaire que cette conduite pouvoit paroître, la Chambre n'y verroit que mieux la pureté de ses intentions, la vérité son zèle, et la vertu d'un homme public. Il est vrai qu'on l'avoit accusé de n'avoir tracasé et calomnié M. Hastings au Bengal et en Angleterre, que par désespoir de n'avoir pu lui arracher sa place, d'avoir manqué le projet de lui succéder, de s'être fait expulser de la direction de la Compagnie des Indes ; mais son caractère étoit au-dessus de pareils soupçons ; et l'on savoit bien qu'il n'étoit pas homme à se laisser entraîner par de semblables motifs.



of India has preferred a single complaint against so long protracted a tyrannical administration? What *talismans* has Mr. Hastings employed? Has he fascinated *all the ancient and venerable priesthood, all the nobility of great antiquity and renown, all the multitude of cities, not exceeded in population and trade by those of the first class in Europe, all the merchants and bankers, all the millions of manufacturers, and mechanicks, all the millions of the tillers of the earth?* Mr. Hastings must certainly be the greatest forcerer, who has ever appeared, beyond all the fabled magicians and necromancers of antiquity. He must be our English *Merlin* revived with superior powers. He must have practised with the most wondrous charms and philtres. What spells, what magic arts, what enchantments, have been so potent, so universal? I cannot trace out in all the folios before us a single line of complaint to the right honourable accuser from the poor *Begums*, although such a correspondence would have been more valued than with any Princess in Europe. He would tenderly have echoed all their sighs and groans, pitied their hideous outcries, added his own *jérémiades*, and deplored their wretched fate, *fallen, fallen, fallen*, instead of rejoicing, as all India did, at the punishment of their seditious and rebellious practices.

The fact, Sir, is, that no man was ever more beloved throughout Indostan than Mr. Hastings. His departure was lamented by all the natives and Europeans as a general calamity. They gave him every public and private testimony of affection and esteem as their common father and friend. The *voluntary tribute* of tears was paid him by a whole people. It was re-



served for a faction and party \* in this House, and in this *annus mirabilis*, to hold us out to the ridicule of mankind, by this parliamentary inquisition, this persecution of exalted merit by an *impeachment*.

But, Sir, if we must of necessity find a comparison of these proceedings among the *Romans*, I shall bring forward that of *Scipio*. He too was *impeached* by a despicable faction, envious of his glory, not emulous of the great actions by which it had been acquired. On the day of the accusation, he with sovereign contempt left his accusers and revilers in the *Forum*, and marched, followed by all the people, to the capitol, to the temple of *Jupiter*, to return thanks to the immortal Gods for his successes over the enemies of *Rome*, and to pray for more friends to his country, equally faithful and fortunate as himself. With the same honest zeal for my native country, I will pray heaven, Sir, to continue to bless England with such men as *Rodney* and *Hastings*.

Much has been said, Sir, about the accepting of *presents* by Mr. Hastings, in direct violation of the Act of Parliament. The fact is admitted, but let us examine the law. By the "Act for establishing certain Regulations for the better management of the Affairs of the *East India Company*, as well in *India* as in *Europe*, &c." the 13th of the King, ch. 63, s. 23. which passed in 1773, it is enacted, that "No Governor General, or &c. shall directly or indirectly by themselves, or by any other person or persons for his or their use, or on his or their behalf, accept, receive, or take, of or from

\* Notwithstanding this, and some other strong symptoms, I hope that the reign of party is nearly at an end. Mr. Francis assured us in his Speech of July 2, 1784, page 16. *I am not a party man in this, or any other question*, and his conduct ever since has shewn how well founded was that assertion. Mr. Francis then not being a party-man, there can be no party-man left in the House of Commons.

" any

“ any person or persons, in any manner, or on any account whatsoever, any present, gift, donation, gratuity, or reward, pecuniary or otherwise; or any promise or engagement for any present, gift, donation, gratuity, or reward, &c.” This, Sir, is the Act by which Mr. Hastings was first appointed Governor General of Bengal. Now, Sir, I ask, where is the proof that Mr. Hastings has violated this law in a single instance? Has he taken *for his use, or on his behalf*, any present, gift, donation, gratuity, or reward? Let the evidence be produced. It is true that various *presents* were at different times received by him, and in particular £ 100,000 from the Nabob of Oude; but it is equally true that they were always carried to the account of the *East India Company*, and actually formed a regular head of revenue after the Act took place. A second Act the 24th of the King, ch. 25. s. 45. which declared “ *that the receiving presents for the use of the East India Company shall be deemed and taken to be extortion,*” did not take place till Jan. 1, 1785, the month before Mr. Hastings embarked for Europe. The last mentioned sum of £ 100,000 was specifically entered as a *present*. These gifts and presents were afterwards issued for the pay of the army. Without these, and other extraordinary aids, the army had disbanded, perhaps massacred their employers, but the Indian empire would certainly have mouldered away. The offering of *presents* is thought in the East a necessary preliminary in all negotiations between a higher power and an inferior, or dependant. If the *present* is not accepted, the suit is understood to be rejected.

It has been asserted, Sir, that during the late contests in India, many, various, and shocking cruelties were committed by the British troops, during the government of

of

of Mr. Hastings, if not by his orders, at least not without his knowledge. These vague assertions have not been corroborated by the slightest evidence. No such stain has at any time been fixed on our Officers and soldiers. Their humanity, and generous feelings for an enemy, have ever been celebrated in grateful strains. It is a fine feature in our national character. I do not mean to extend this praise to every *sepooy* in our pay. The *sepoys* of Asia may possibly be at times as ungovernable, as brutal, as merciless, as the Croats and Pandours of Europe; but no single instance of cruelty has been brought home against any European in our service, nor any evidence offered to the House, which can warrant the imputation on any of the troops in our employ \*.

\* In a late Publication, intituled, "An historical relation of the Origin, Progress, and final Dissolution of the Government of the *Robilla Afgans* in the Northern Provinces of Hindostan," by Charles Hamilton Esq; an Officer in the service of the Honourable East India Company on the *Bengal* establishment, is the following excellent passage.

"Of all the events which have been made use of for the purposes of crimination against the servants of the East India Company, none have made a greater figure either in the national proceedings, or in the perishable publications of the day, than the *Robilla* war, and various efforts have been made to paint both the conduct and the consequences of it in the most horrible colours.

"When, in the perusal of history, we read of *whole nations* being *extirpated* by the *Goths*, or *rooted out* by the *Vandals*, we picture to ourselves a country invaded by a band of fierce and savage conquerors, who pursue the hapless inhabitants with indiscriminate massacre, carry off the few they spare from the sword into perpetual captivity, and proceed in their destructive career, until the whole territory exhibits nothing but a dreary, silent waste!

"Similar to this is the opinion which (from the force and extent of the expressions that have been applied to it) has been, by many, conceived of the conquest of *Robilkund*.

"God forbid that *British troops* should ever be employed in acts of such detestable atrocity—With respect to those in particular who effected that resolution, it may with confidence be affirmed, that, however high their sense of subordination, however ready at all times to obey the most perilous orders of their superiors, had such a service been allotted to them, they would have turned from it with abhorrence."

Preface, p. 12.

Sir,

Sir, I was very happy last monday to be in my place, when a right honourable gentleman, one of the *Commissioners for the affairs of India*, opened his *Indian budget*. I heard with great satisfaction his just, perspicuous, and accurate account of the prosperous state of the *East India Company*, both at home and abroad. His facts were founded; his reasoning strong and masterly. It was a compleat answer to all we heard two years ago from a gentleman \* near me, against *the temporary support of a trading Company, whose affairs he was PERFECTLY SURE, would be found on examination, so compleatly and irretrievably ruined, as to be beyond the reach of any effectual relief, and that we could not, by any efforts this nation could make, prevent the ruin of the Company.*

I rejoice, Sir, at the present flourishing state of our affairs in the East, so truly given by the right honourable gentleman; but I desire to remind him, that to the uncommon abilities of Mr. Hastings he owes the scene, *where he may triumph*, and that in spite of all the rivals of Mr. Hastings's power, he will acknowledge with me that the late Governor General of Bengal could *alone* have preserved *India*. I cannot entirely join in his expression that *India* is the *brightest* jewel in our crown. It is undoubtedly a very fine jewel, of great splendour and

\* In the introductory part of a Speech in the House of Commons on July 2, 1784, published by Philip Francis Esq; it is said, page 11. "Mr. Burke earnestly conjured the House (*June 16, 1784*) to be very cautious how they consented to give away the property of their constituents, for the temporary support of a trading Company, whose affairs, *he was perfectly sure, would be found on examination, so compleatly and irretrievably ruined, as to be beyond the reach of any effectual relief*;—that by giving it to the India Company, they could only protract the period, but could not, by any efforts this nation could make, prevent the ruin of the company."

The Coalition in January 1784, sunk Indian Stock to 118. Mr. Pitt raised it to 171 in May 1787. The Proprietors cannot be at a loss to decide who are their best friends.



brilliancy, but surely not the *brighest* jewel in the *triple crown*, which our monarch wears. It may indeed equal in value all the jewels in the diadem of one of his three kingdoms, for it is certainly of high intrinsic worth. What acknowledgements therefore are due to the man, who preserved such a jewel in the crown, must be left to the gratitude of his country, and of the Sovereign, who wears the Crown.

The House, Sir, will naturally conclude from all the reasoning I have used, and the facts stated, that I shall never plead the pitiful and false doctrine of a *set-off*, of which so much has been said. The doctrine of great merits balancing great crimes can never be admitted in a judicial process. In the present case it is entirely inapplicable. I stand aloof, and for my part reject it with disdain. I think that services of so important a nature deserve rewards and honours. I maintain that there is no proof before us of Mr. Hastings's guilt, but ample evidence of his incessant labours for his country, of his signal services, and merited success. Justice, policy, honour, gratitude, plead then strongly with us, surely not to *impeach*, but to distinguish and reward national merit in our countryman.

I regret, Sir, that the constitutional word, *impeachment*, should now be prostituted to the purposes of party and faction. The word *coalition* is scarcely become more hackneyed, more odious. We have been amused with flowery harangues on no less than three threatened *impeachments*. The *first* occupied our attention for several years. It was the watch-word of the present accuser of Mr. Hastings. He made the walls of this House reverberate the sound—till a little before he joined  
the



the noble Lord in the blue ribband. He declared that the *Articles of Impeachment* against that noble Lord were ready drawn, and in his pocket. They have slept there ever since. The grounds of those *Articles* were not trifling. The noble Lord was accused of the loss of half our empire, and of the foulest corruption. Those crimes, he said, were *only to be expiated on the public scaffold*, to which it was certain, that the *tribunal of Justice* would doom the noble Lord. The noble Lord, and the right honourable gentleman, now join hands in high good humour in the *coalition* dance.

The *second impeachment* was declared against the brave and fortunate *Rodney*, on the persuasive eloquence of some Dutch Jews, whose evidence met with implicit faith on a variety of accounts. The Admiral had been recalled in the very first month of the new administration, almost in the hour of victory. We have heard no more of that *impeachment*, but our grateful countrymen are loud in the applause of the courage and conduct of the English hero, who captured three foreign admirals, and took sixteen sail of the line from the enemy.

The present *impeachment* is in my idea almost as ridiculous, but I remember an observation of the present accuser of Mr. Hastings, which appears to me perfectly just, that *obloquy is a necessary ingredient in the composition of all true glory*.

Sir, I trust that the day of delusion is past. I have been dazzled with the brilliant eloquence, and captivated with the beauty and variety of an honourable gentleman's wit on the fourth charge, lamenting at the same time the indecent rancour, and coarse abuse, of se-

veral expressions \*. But, Sir, he trusted entirely to the rich stores of a luxuriant imagination, and chose to indulge in all its happy fallies. The warmth of his glowing colours was more to be admired than the truth of his outline. He never condescended to reason closely, nor concerned himself about any grave argument, or dull matter of fact. Every auditor was highly amused; no man was convinced. I waited with no small impatience, but in vain, for a detail of clear well-established facts, for the evidence of historical truth, supported by unexceptionable witnesses. No such appeal was made; the sole reliance was on the seducing arts of a powerful meretricious eloquence, which was, as it generally is, too successful.

Sir, from the evidence on our table it has been demonstrated, that this *first Report* is totally unfounded. I therefore give my hearty negative to its being *now* read a second time. I wish, Sir, we were fairly rid of this disgraceful business, which, if pursued, will cover

\* Mr. Sheridan often lost sight of the respect, which every Member owes to the English senate, as well as to his own character. He brought a *railing accusation* against Mr. Hastings, called him a *traitor* and a *trickster*, a *serpent*, a *snake*, and a *felon kite*. He compared the Governor General of Bengal's progress to Benares and Oude, to a *highwayman's* falling out to *Bagshot* and *Hounslow*, talked of his *wielding a bloody scimitar* in one hand, and with the other *picking a pocket*, and asserted, that, instead of the *sword of Government*, he used the *assassin's dagger*, with much other ribaldry. The *urbanum*, the *elegant*, the *liberal*, which *Cicero* strongly recommends, and Mr. Sheridan perfectly understands, were sacrificed by him on this occasion to party rancour, at the very beginning of a prosecution. He copied too faithfully the modern *Cicero*. In the printed speech of Feb. 28, 1785, page 87. Mr. Burke says, *Benfield was a criminal, who long since ought to have fattened the region kites with his offal*. The expression is Shakespearean, adapted to the stage, to tragedy, to the character of Hamlet against the incestuous murderer of his father, but surely highly indecent in the senate against an absent man, lately a member, not under any accusation. It places *raillery* in *railing*, as Swift says, and is a savage Indian warfare, like throwing the tomahawk.

us with confusion. In order to extricate the House effectually from the labyrinth of error, in which we are wandering, I shall, as soon as the negative, has been given to the present motion, according to Parliamentary form, move *that this Report be read a second time on this day six months.*

F I N I S.

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I N T H E  
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*Pulchra pro Libertate.*

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